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Conducting global team-based ethnography: Methodological challenges and practical methods

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Abstract

Ethnography has often been seen as the province of the lone researcher; however, increasingly management scholars are examining global phenomena, necessitating a shift to global team-based ethnography. This shift presents some fundamental methodological challenges, as well as practical issues of method, that have not been examined in the literature on organizational research methods. That is the focus of this paper. We first outline the methodological implications of a shift from single researcher to team ethnography, and from single case site to the multiple sites that constitute global ethnography. Then we present a detailed explanation of a global, team-based ethnography that we conducted over three years. Our study of the global reinsurance industry involved a team of five ethnographers conducting fieldwork in 25 organizations across 15 countries. We outline three central challenges we encountered; team division of labour, team sharing, and constructing a global ethnographic object. The paper concludes by suggesting that global, team-based, ethnography provides important insights into global phenomena, such as regulation, finance, and climate change among others, that are of interest to management scholars.

Keywords

Ethnography, Globalization, Team-based research, Global Practice

Introduction

In this paper we focus on designing and conducting global team-based ethnography, motivated by the fact that many phenomena of importance in the management field are not contained within single organizational or geographical boundaries. Globalization of economies and societies, and the spread of practices between organizations call for new forms of organizational ethnography (e.g., Falzon 2009; Rouleau, de Rond and Musca 2014; Van Maanen 2006; Watson 2011). Specifically, there is a need to move to a global or multi-sited conceptualization of ethnography as a 'response to empirical changes in the world and therefore to transformed locations of cultural production' (Marcus 1995: 97). We argue that global team-based ethnography not only enables us to extend our theoretical frameworks and understanding, but also delivers particularly rich and relevant findings for managers and organizations operating within increasingly globally interconnected domains (Watson, 2011). It also presents challenges that must be worked through and understood for management and organization scholars interested in global practices. However, there has thus far been little discussion in the literature about 'global ethnography', based on a multi-sited and team-based research design.

Drawing on our experience of conducting multi sited team-based ethnography of the global reinsurance industry; this paper is organized along the following lines. We first review the different types of research designs that have been used in the organizational ethnography literature, and position our multi sited and team-based approach within this research tradition. As we do not aim to provide an exhaustive analysis of the organizational ethnography literature, we do not directly address other dimensions of ethnographic research, such as analysis or the writing of ethnographic tales, which have been comprehensively examined elsewhere (Cunliffe 2010; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011; Van Maanen 1988). Second, we summarize our research project – an ethnography of the global reinsurance industry –

explaining how our ethnographic object unfolded. The 'ethnographic object' is, quite simply, the phenomenon which is being studied ethnographically (Falzon, 2009). Such ethnographic objects unfold as they are constructed by ethnographer(s), including the boundaries of the study, which is particularly pertinent in global ethnography (Hine, 2007; Marcus, 1995). In the last section, we reflect on our experience of doing global team-based ethnography and how we overcame three central challenges; team division of labour, team sharing, and constructing a global ethnographic object. Our aim is to conceptualize the methodological challenges of conducting multi-sited, team-based ethnography, and to provide some practical insights into methods for its conduct.

Two evolutions in the conduct of organizational ethnography

We build on Watson (2011: 205) to define ethnography as a method 'which draws upon the writers close observation of and involvement with people in particular social settings and relates the words spoken and the practices observed or experienced to the overall cultural framework within which they occurred.' This section briefly outlines some important trends in organizational ethnography research towards multi-sited global ethnography (Falzon 2009; Hannerz 2003; Marcus 1995), and team ethnography (Creese et al., 2008).

The idealized image of ethnography

Ethnography research has traditionally been carried out by a single ethnographer immersed in a single site, with the aim of gaining a very fine-grained understanding of a (usually) small scale society or community (Geertz 1973; Mead 2001/1956). Hannerz (2003: 201-202), for instance, recalls that the typical figure of the ethnographer in the 1950s was an 'Oxford man (no doubt here about gender) (…) [who] would proceed to his chosen primitive society to spend there usually two years.' 'Being there' – embedded in the detail of a specific

location, culture, community – is essential. Even though some traditionally trained ethnographers could move from one site to another and engage with a variety of spatial practices as part of their field work, as did Philippe Descola for instance in his study of the Jivaro Indians of Amazonian Ecuador (Descola 1996; see also: Malinowksy, in Hannerz, 2003: 202), the spirit of these works remained that of traditional ethnography. The conceptualization of space was very traditional, not explicitly acknowledging that space is socially produced (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), and not questioning the idea that the 'local was an adequate form of ethnographic space' (Falzon, 2009: 5).

In addition, traditional ethnography is also primarily performed by a single ethnographer, who through in-depth immersion in a local single community comes to produce a subjective and situated account. Through the ethnographic narrative, the researcher translates his/her own experience of being there. As Cunliffe (2010: 226) nicely puts it 'ethnography [is] a room with a view'. Ethnographers have long acknowledged that 'who' the ethnographer is influences 'what' is said, and 'how', about the ethnographic subjects. Most ethnographic experiences thus remain 'lonely' experiences tied to the experience of that individual.

The traditional approach to ethnography where a single researcher focused on a single site is well represented in organizational research (Dalton 1959; Kanter 1977; Kunda 1992/2006; Pettigrew 1985; Selznick 1949; Watson, 1994, to name a few). For example, the ethnographic works which are 'organizational studies avant la lettre' (Yanow, Ybema and van Hulst 2012: 333; Zickar and Carter, 2010) were conducted in single locations, such as, a steel mill in Pittsburg (Williams, 1920), or the Pennsylvania Railroad system (Hersey, 1932). This single site approach and spirit is also prevalent in Van Maanen's classic works (1988), and remains characteristic of recent organizational ethnographic research (Alvesson 1998; Kaplan 2011; Orr 1996; Rouleau 2005; Samra-Fredericks 2003; Zilber 2002, to name a few).

Global and multi-sited ethnography

From the early 1980s, some scholars have advocated a new form of ethnography, called multi-sited (Falzon 2009; Marcus 1995), multi-local (Hannerz, 2003) or global (Burawoy 2000, 2001; Gille and Riain 2002) ethnography. These all share an interest in the ethnographic study of the global (or interconnected) contemporary world; for example in Marcus' (1995) case being inspired by Immanuel Wallenstein's world-system analysis. These ethnographers share the assumption with traditional ethnography that 'there is no supra-local phenomenon except in so far as it is constituted in the local'. However, they also attempt to study 'apparently global phenomena' (Hine, 2007: 655-656) which 'cannot be accounted for by focusing on a single site' (Falzon, 2009: 1). Consequently, such ethnography centres attention on 'the construction of the ethnographic object' (Hine 2007: 655), with these authors promoting imagery about the unfolding ethnographic object and the relation between the local and the global.

This emphasis on the global, contrasts with a definition of multi-sited ethnography more commonly used in organization studies, which does not refer to this global dimension, even as they might look beyond a single site (e.g., Michel 2011; Pratt 2000). Here, we instead look at multi-sited designs as a means to follow global phenomenon: 'the global is an emergent condition of arguing about the connection among sites in a multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995: 99). Thus, we emphasize both the multi-sited (Marcus, 1995) and global (Burawoy, 2000) as entwined in Marcus' definition, using the term 'global ethnography' to mean accessing global phenomena through multiple-sites.

Two main reasons explain ethnographers' interest in the 1980s for a new approach to ethnography, and a new way of conceptualizing the ethnographic object (Falzon, 2009).[1] First, with theoretical interest in spatiality growing in social sciences, ethnographers came to

realize that the ethnographic space also is socially constructed (Falzon 2009; Golden-Biddle and Locke 1993; Lefebvre 1991/1974; Van Maanen 1988; Watson 1994, 2000). Second, ethnographers began to question their traditional approach due to the globalization of societies and economies and the greater interconnectedness of many social phenomena (Marcus, 1995). As ethnographers recognized that contemporary societies are characterized by mobility and interconnection, that communities are dispersed in many locations and ultimately, that lives are 'lived not in discrete locations, but through various forms of connections and circulation' (Hine, 2007: 656), they needed a new way of doing ethnography that would allow them to follow the myriad of connections that constitute contemporary life (Marcus, 1995). All this led some ethnographers to re-conceptualize the ethnographic object, and to formulate a new way of doing ethnography. However, a central challenge that is implicit (Burawoy 2000), yet rarely illustrated, is how to simultaneously retain the local and deep immersion at the heart of ethnography (Van Maanen 1996; Van Maanen 2011; Watson 2011; Yanow et al., 2012) with the desire to expand understanding of the global as it plays out across multiple sites (Marcus, 1995).

Global ethnography emphasizes the circulation of objects, meanings, identities and the associations and connections between local practices. As Falzon (2009: 2) explains:

> Research design proceeds by a series of juxtapositions in which the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations, rather than something monolithic or external to them. In terms of methods, multi-sited ethnography involves a spatially dispersed field through which the ethnographer moves – actually, via sojourns in two or more places, or conceptually, by means of techniques of juxtaposition of data.

In particular, Marcus (1995) argues that tracing (or following) something is central to constructing the global in ethnography. The global is not posited as merely the context of the local; it is the focus of study, and emergent in 'arguing about the connection among sites in a multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995; Upadhya 2008: 991). For example, due to his interest in understandings the global flow of the Tokyo seafood market, Bestor (2001: 78). conducted a multi-sited ethnography that took him to the 'auction floods of the Tsukiji [Tokyo] market, on docks in New England, into hearing rooms in Washington D.C., to trade shows in Boston, into markets in Seoul, abroad supply boats in the Straits of Gibraltar and inside refrigerated warehouses at Narita's airfreight terminals, amongst many other places' (also see: Caliskan's (2010) study of the global cotton market)

In organizational studies, insights applicable to the study of globally situated phenomenon are also visible – even though it does not (yet) constitute a clear turn. While global ethnography is uncommon, many studies nonetheless draw on multi-sited methods to access knowledge about a particular organization (Pratt 2000; Yanow 1996), or to compare two different types of contexts or organizations (Vallas 2003; Zaloom 2006), or a type of actor within a similar organizational context (Michel 2011). Further, some organizational scholars have described 'mobile' ethnography which priorities the phenomenon, such as a particular practice, rather than a particular geographically or culturally-bounded site, demanding instead that the ethnographer follows that actor or practice (Cooren, Brummans and Charrieras 2008; Czarniawska 2007; Nicolini 2013). Such mobility is required to follow global phenomenon in multiple settings.

Team ethnography

Another recent trend in ethnography is a greater reliance on teams (e.g., Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani, and Martin 2008; Erickson and Stull 1997). As Bresler et al. (1996) explain, the

myth of the ‘lone ranger’ has progressively been softened and more ethnography studies now involve research teams (e.g., Creese et al., 2006; Prus and Irini 1980; Snow and Anderson 1993). An increased interest in team ethnography is partly due to changes in the academic mode of production– larger grants and increasing competition lead researchers to do more research in teams (Creese et al., 2008; Mauthner and Doucet 2008). Beyond enabling researchers to share the work of large scale projects (Price, 1973), team-based research is also promoted because it brings diverse set of expertise, and can allow more interdisciplinary and thorough comprehension (Barry et al., 1999; Bresler and Wasser, 1996).

This movement from individual to team touches the heart of ethnographic method when we consider that the ethnographer is the research instrument (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008; Scales, Bailey and Lloyd, 2011). The question is how we make such ethnographies ‘whole’ given that the ethnographic experience of ‘being there’ is said to be intrinsically personal (Cunliffe 2010; Price 1973; Van Maanen 2011). Team ethnography is much more than a change of scale, there are some substantial differences between the two ways of doing ethnography, such as the necessity to collaborate to share observation and confront interpretation (Scales et al., 2011). As a result, reflexivity in research teams leads to collective sense making processes that are quite different from the ones experienced by ‘lone ranger’ scholars. There is much discussion of potential pitfalls for teams of ethnographers (e.g., Mountz et al., 2003), such as strict delineations of labour that prevent sharing and reflexivity (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008). Such issues are likely to be exacerbated in multi-national teams where geographical distance between team members is a factor (Easterby-Smith and Malina, 1999). Yet, as Bresler and Wasser (1996: 6) argue, research teams can represent a powerful ‘interpretative zone (…) where multiple viewpoints are held in dynamic tension as [the] group seeks to make sense of fieldwork issues and meaning’. Others suggest that sharing of other elements of the ethnographic experience beyond simply data, such as

emotions, might be important and positive aspect of team-ethnography that differentiate it from the 'lone-ranger' approach (Barry et al., 1999).

Despite these important differences 'there has been little discussion about the relationship between collaborative research, as an 'academic mode of production' (Stanley, 1990: 4) and the knowledge it produces' (Mauthner and Doucet 2008: 972). Very few research teams actually share their experience of team-based ethnography and explain how they have produced a shared understanding (exceptions include: Erickson and Stull 1997; Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser 2002; Wasser and Bresler 1996). Further, most that have discussed their experiences have focused on specific issues such as reflexivity (Barry et al., 1999) or fieldnotes (Creese et al., 2009). Hence, we still know little about how teams of ethnographers work together, their concrete methods and the way they practice research.

Team ethnography is, however, indubitably growing in social science and this trend is also visible in organization studies, although rarely discussed. Issues concerning team ethnography have long been recognized in organizations studies since Price (1973) reflected directly on such a research design. More recently, the work of the team of Rix-Lièvre and Lièvre (2010), who studied the polar expedition together, is one of the first to reflect on team ethnography within organization studies. These authors show how one researcher was able to access the common shared experience of the expedition, while another focused on individual experiences at specific moments of the same expedition. They provide an important example of team ethnography where experiences are shared (Creese et al., 2008; Mauthner and Doucet 2008) rather than divided (Mountz et al., 2003). However, explicitly multi-national ethnography teams have been less examined in organizational studies (Marcus, 1995) and those who have written about team ethnography do not explicitly reflect on the fact that a team might also be a way to access multiple sites (Smets, Burke, Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2014).

Towards a team ethnography of global practices

We now present our experience of conducting team ethnography while following the global practice of risk trading in the reinsurance industry. This involved bringing together the two streams of research on global and team ethnography outlined above. As we have highlighted, each comes with specific methodological challenges, and bringing these two streams together results in its own unique array of challenges. There are very few guiding examples of such studies in the organizational studies field as the available literature tends to focus on issues to do with global ethnography or team ethnography rather than both. For instance, in their ethnography of the 'market for technical contractors', Barley and Kunda (2006) discuss how they accessed the global through a multi-sited study that incorporated contractors, clients and staffing agencies, but they do not explain the team element of this, simply using the term 'we.' Conversely, Hannenz (2003) reflects on the multiple sites he accessed as a single researcher. There has thus been little said about how to simultaneously balance the localized immersion at the heart of ethnography with following phenomena globally and constructing those phenomena as a shared experience in a team.

Our unfolding research project: Context, team and project parameters

Reinsurance context and the ethnographic object

Reinsurance is a financial industry that provides the capital to pay claims following large-scale disasters such as the attack on the World Trade Centre or Hurricane Katrina. It is effectively the insurance of insurance companies. Insurance companies buy reinsurance in order to enable them to pay their policyholders following large-scale events or higher than expected losses. Reinsurance companies are the capital suppliers that underwrite these risks,

in return for which they receive premium, just as insurers receive an annual premium from you for insuring your car or house.

In conducting our study we came to define a global financial industry as one in which 'patterns of relatedness and coordination … are global in scope' and in which 'processes have global breadth' (Knorr Cetina and Bruegger 2002: 907). As we generated our ethnographic object, we found that the notion of global ethnography was particularly relevant to a study of the reinsurance industry. While reinsurers are competing firms, no single reinsurer takes on all the risk represented in any reinsurance deal. This is because the events such as Hurricane Sandy or the Japanese earthquake and tsunami, that underpin such deals are simply too large. Rather, multiple reinsurers around the world take shares of the same reinsurance deal, so that if something catastrophic happens these reinsurers bear the risk collectively (Borscheid, Gugerli and Straumann 2013). Our ethnographic study addresses the question of how globally dispersed reinsurers are able to collectively bear vastly different types of risks from around the world. Consequently, we see the reinsurance industry as enacted within the densely woven practices of participants located in multiple sites (see also: Abolafia 2001; Beunza and Stark 2012; Knorr Cetina and Bruegger 2002; Zaloom 2006) who interact with sufficient coherence to enact a pattern of collective risk bearing (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek and Spee, forthcoming). In this section we explain how we generated the ethnographic object of the 'global practice of reinsurance trading' as part of an unfolding process in the field to answer this question.

Our research team

This project evolved over three years. It began with a single researcher (PJ) but rapidly expanded to a team of three (APS and MS) and later to a team of five (RB and LC). PJ had considerable prior ethnographic experience, including conducting longitudinal multi-sited

and team ethnography and as the grant-holder was the project leader. Both APS and MS had ethnographic experience, with MS some multi-sited and multi-national experience. RB had experience in qualitative research across multiple sites but had not been engaged in ethnography. These four team members had a background in business studies, while the fifth, LC, had an academic background in management studies as well as in the economics of risk and uncertainty, but had no ethnographic experience prior to the project.

Project overview

From mid-2009 we accessed 53 subsidiary sites in 25 organizations, across 15 countries (see Table 1). We became deeply immersed in the everyday practice of trading reinsurance deals in the trading hubs in London, Bermuda and cities in Continental Europe that, together, comprise the majority of the world's reinsurance capital. We also included the important Asia-Pacific region, through fieldwork in Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Australia. The selection of these sites emerged as our immersion in the field unfolded, the result of which is outlined in Table 1 below.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The team had extensive and unusual access to conduct such an ethnographic study of a global industry. We spent hours sitting along alongside underwriters at their desks, attended their meetings and conferences, and joined them in social activities. We also interviewed everyone from CEOs, to underwriters, account executives and analysts within those reinsurance companies. Quite literally, we sipped champagne on sun-drenched terraces in Monte Carlo at the main industry conference, drank pints in watering holes on the square mile in London, downed shots on Christmas Eve in Bermuda, had leisurely lunches and

climbed mountains in Continental Europe, and danced at cabaret parties in Singapore. We arrived early and sat late in offices during the major renewal periods, observing frustration, boredom, exhilaration and stress, as underwriters dealt in major financial transactions, sometimes worth millions. During this time, we experienced the global industry reaction to natural disasters, such as earthquakes in Chile, New Zealand and Japan, floods in Australia and Thailand, bushfires in Australia and California, and manmade disasters such as Deep Water Horizon through the eyes of the people who underwrite such events and pay for their losses. As an outcome of 'being there' in these different sites as a team we collected 935 separate observation field-notes[2] and 382 interviews; plus records of an additional 146 non-work related events such as social events and other forms of industry engagement.

Consistent with the ethnographic method the phenomena of interest evolved through fieldwork and guided our on-going data collection (Marcus 1995; Watson 2011; Zickar and Carter 2010). We now provide a chronological narrative of how the project unfolded, including selecting team members and sites as the ethnographic object evolved (see Table 2).

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Initial project parameters

PJ won a competitive grant to conduct research within the reinsurance industry in May 2009. The call for this grant set up the research parameters as an ethnographic comparison of two critical reinsurance trading hubs; entitled: 'London compared with Bermuda: An ethnographic comparison of the basis of trading and the implications for future evolution.' From the outset, therefore, the project was intended to be multi-sited. Further, the ethnographic object was broadly defined as a comparison of trading in two hubs rather than related to any specific organization. While the grant set out the desired methodology

(ethnographic) and general focus (comparison of industry trading practice in two hubs) all other decisions around method were left to the researcher and intellectual property remains with the academic. Nonetheless, a steering group was helpfully appointed to assist with access and disseminating industry-focused knowledge, as well as providing feedback on our emerging results.

Unfolding Point 1: Defining the scope

In mid-2009, as PJ undertook preliminary interviews and scoped the study, it became apparent that the project was beyond a single researcher. As the focus was on industry trading practices, developing ethnographic understanding of these practices required us to select a group of organizations located in the two trading hubs. Eleven firms were initially accessed (later expanded), four with subsidiaries operating out of both hubs, so constituting 15 sites at which to access data. In discussion with the industry steering group, she felt that underwriting practice would need to be observed across four to six underwriters in each site to get sufficient depth of understanding about their basis of trading. Furthermore, as a firm basis for comparison, practice would need to be followed simultaneously in real-time in each region (Czarniawska 2007). As this scope of the study become clearer, further funding was agreed and APS and MS were appointed to the project fulltime in September and October 2009 respectively.

Unfolding Point 2: What data should we collect?

Before entering the field this team of three set up a common protocol for observing the basis of industry trading, allowing for comparison of practices in London and Bermuda. We had some indicators from interviews to guide us on what shaped industry trading, such as a series of common dates at which all deals are renewed and when trading is at its busiest.

Hence we decided to follow the annual cycle by observing underwriters in the various sites in the lead up to each renewal date (1 January being the most important). Furthermore, as the practice of underwriting was identified as the basis of trading, the underwriters trading the reinsurance deals became the unit of observation. Specifically, we would sit beside them, making notes and recording, while they analysed, quoted and placed capital on deals, observing their actions and interactions, listening to their phone calls, noting their emails, and following them to their team, client and broker meetings, as well as to conferences, in the lead up to these renewal deadlines. Beyond that, we could not say what to observe as this instead unfolded naturally in the field. This remained the basis of our observational data for the lifespan of the project.

Unfolding Point 3: Sharing observations at sites as ethnographic object unfolds

While PJ negotiated the initial access in the expanding number of sites prior to observation, we felt that for every member of the team to be spread across every site would be inappropriate. Consistent with the notions of researcher as instrument (Cunliffe 2010; Marshall and Rossman 2006; Van Maanen 1996; Van Maanen 2011; Yanow 2012) we decided to immerse different team members in specific organizational contexts, to achieve deep saturation in that site (Watson 2011). This was also felt to be the most efficient way of operating. Hence, one member (PJ) would go to Bermuda, while the other two would divide the sites in London.

The flaw in our plan became obvious in November 2009 not long after our initial immersion in fieldwork. Embedded as we were in different trading hubs, we quickly recognized that while we felt we were speaking to the same issues, we couldn't be sure. As we began to share our initial experiences we realized that our comparisons would be richer if we could share the experience of trading practices in at least some sites across the trading

hubs (Mauthner and Doucet 2008). In short, to feel comfortable with the comparative picture that was emerging we needed to share the actual ethnographic experience in both hubs. Hence, we decided that APS and MS should experience Bermuda at a peak trading times as well, while PJ would take over their respective London sites during the periods either of them was in Bermuda. To ensure a good handover, each investigator in London first took take PJ for a week of shadowing with them in their respective sites. Similarly, PJ accompanied each investigator to Bermuda, and shadowed together for a week. Everyone now experienced all contexts, enabling us to better share reflections and tie together our interpretations as a basis for comparison of trading practices (Smets, Burke, Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2014).

Unfolding Point 4: Reconceiving the ethnographic object

By mid-2010, the comparative basis of the ethnographic object had faded into the background and the collective risk trading practice became the foreground. Our understanding had evolved and we realized that we were seeing in the two trading hubs was only part of a picture of an interconnected global practice. While there were obviously different nuances in the different trading hubs and firms, underwriters appeared to be doing very similar things to make capital allocation decisions, often on the same deals. Furthermore, they often seemed to connect with, or consider each other across our sites and trading hubs in these trading practices. In particular, the specific global interconnectivity of this industry, that each reinsurance deal is spread over several reinsurance companies that take shares at the same price, had become clear. Hence, underwriters in different firms dispersed globally were sharing risk collectively on each deal. As the team followed the observation to the end of a renewal cycle (the date where deals are traded by) in both Bermuda and London, it seemed the basis of trading was interconnected, based on common

and somewhat interdependent practices across firms and regions. The ethnographic object was no longer a comparison of distinct practices, but a single global risk trading practice.

With this reconceptualization of the ethnographic object, we began to experience frustration with the project's scope. Continental Europe was frequently mentioned by participants and emerged as critical to the dynamics of the industry in our fieldwork. Together London, Bermuda, and Continental Europe comprise over 80% of the global reinsurance industry, with the largest players in Continental Europe (Holborn 2009). And yet we had no experience of underwriting practice in this critical trading hub.

Unfolding Point 5: We extend to other sites; it's global

In early mid-2010 PJ discussed the role of Continental Europe with the industry steering group; it seemed the missing part of the emerging puzzle about how an industry of globally distributed and independent actors could collectively bear risk on a range of deals. They agreed and further funding was negotiated through a number of sources. We could continue to follow the unfolding ethnographic object into the global space, with a second round of funding entitled 'Trading risks: The role of European firms in the global reinsurance market'. Again, the ethnographic object of study was not upon European firms per se, but on the global (rather than comparative) trading practice of an industry.

Turning our attention to Continental Europe we identified organizations that would ensure we covered the range of risks in the global industry. In additional to five European subsidiaries of three organizations we had already engaged with, from early 2011 we identified another six firms covering the largest to the more specialist players in the Continental European trading hubs. These nine firms resulted in 16 subsidiaries in multiple countries; with the main concentration in Switzerland (Zurich), Germany (Munich) and France (Paris) (see Table 1) which are the key trading hubs in Continental Europe. In

addition, we would do some interviewing, shorter two-to-three day observational visits, and video calls with subsidiaries of our nine firms in their other locations (such as Canada or the US), to confirm any emerging impressions.

We had also become very aware of the impact upon the industry of risks originating in parts of the globe that we had not yet understood. For example, during 2010 and 2011 we observed the industry as it suffered heavy losses from flooding in Australia and Thailand, earthquakes in New Zealand, and an earthquake and tsunami in Japan, which all had ramifications for pricing globally. Realizing that data from the Asia Pacific region (much of which was an "emerging market" for reinsurance) would complement our understanding of global industry trading in response to such events, PJ made an exploratory trip to Singapore, a key hub in the region. Following this initial trip, we accessed funding to collect interviews and conduct some short observations in ten sites across four countries, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

Unfolding Point 6: We extend the team

These extensions of the study necessitated evolution in our team during 2011. First, while PJ remained fully devoted to the project, as is typical of such projects (Barry et al., 1999; Garland et al., 2006), APS and MS could not continue to be full-time ethnographers as they had posts that required other commitments. Second, we needed specific language skills. Zurich was largely English speaking, even in the corridors because underwriters came from all over the world. However, while the language of the industry is English we needed native French and German speakers in Munich or Paris to make observation of informal interactions possible (Markus, 1995). There was funding to buy-out some of the teaching of MS, a native German speaker, to collect observational German data, while APS, also a native German speaker, conducted some interviews in German. RB was appointed as a new full-time

postdoctoral research fellow, and was responsible for Zurich. Finally, LC, a native French speaker, joined the team as the person responsible for Paris and Brussels. Meanwhile, PJ continued to be involved in data collection in all main sites in Continental Europe as well as being primarily responsible for the extension of the study into the Asia-Pacific.

Unfolding Point 7: We are close to saturation

By the beginning of 2012, we had a fairly clear idea of the unit of observation how global underwriting trading practice across a range of deals generates collective risk bearing. Our ethnographic object now remained relatively stable, but the details surrounding it became much richer, as we understood how different elements of global practice are brought together in an interdependent and collective approach to trading. Our team meetings had evolved from discussing and sharing new insights and experiences into the global practice, to refining our already held understandings; which was also reflected in our increasingly stabilized coding structure. We presented our findings, which resonated strongly with our industry participants who were surprised and pleased at how much they learned from us about their industry, as we provided reports, industry presentations, press releases and interviews to conclude our study. After nearly three years, we felt we could withdraw from the field.

Reflections on the challenges of team-based global ethnography

In this section we reflect on our responses to fundamental methodological challenges that global team-based ethnography represents. We focus on three key issues that were both practical problems and also have implications for the nature of the ethnography. Figure 1 outlines these three challenges and how they were 'worked through'.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Team division of labour

As illustrated in the unfolding points of the project narrative, division of labour within the team was a practical challenge about "who should do what and where?" This issue is outlined in the literature that discusses the methodological challenge of team ethnography: the decisions we made would affect shared reflexivity and the ability to generate a common ethnographic object for study (Creese et al., 2008; Mauthner and Doucet, 2008). Essentially, we had two challenges.

First, we had to select between the tendency to 'divide and conquer' (Easterby-Smith and Malina, 1999; Mountz et al., 2003), which gives efficiency through separate cover of sites, and shared immersion across sites, which enhances collective interpretation (Creese et al., 2008). Initially, we opted to divide and conquer, on the basis that this would enable deeper interpretations within individual organizations by each researcher. Yet, as Mauthner and Doucet (2008) suggest, this presented a barrier to sharing interpretations and generating confidence in constructing a collective ethnographic object (see Unfolding Point 4 and Table 1). Hence, we decided that one researcher should remain the primary 'expert' in each region and/or subsidiary site, but that at least one other team member should also have substantial ethnographic experience of that site and trading hub. As shown in Table 1, this added interpretive 'density', with many organization as well as individual subsidiaries having three researchers involved in ethnographic observation (Creese et al., 2008). For example, in Firm 4, PJ undertook initial data collection with RB and with LC, conducing joint interviews and some joint observations. As RB and LC then focused on two subsidiaries of that organization with some ongoing contact from PJ, the three of us shared emails, discussing our joint experience, as with LC's email to RB: 'Henry has just mentioned that there is something going on about [ClientX] but wouldn't elaborate. See if you can find out more in your afternoon meeting as it might be interesting.' Similarly, when in Singapore, PJ added context to the discussions about the Singapore office we were hearing about in the European

headquarters. Our densely overlapping experience thus enabled us to construct a global ethnographic object.

Second, as it became apparent that we were following a global phenomenon, it was also ideal that one team member be familiar with all companies, trading hubs and subsidiaries.[3] This meant that in addition to country overlaps (see Table 1) at least one of us would be familiar first-hand with the majority of sites.[4] As the project progressed, this meant PJ's role became what Price (1973) terms the conduit for the different parts of the ethnography done by multiple team members. As team membership evolved over time (see Unfolding Point 6), this was important in developing understanding our observations as an interconnected global phenomenon. Importantly, however, while this division of labour meant PJ assumed a leadership role, we avoided criticisms that project leaders can become remote from the field (e.g. Mauthner and Doucet, 2008). Rather, we ensured that PJ, through continued immersion in the field throughout the life of the project, was able to provide coherence in knitting the various contexts together, in consultation with other team members who might have greater country, firm or subsidiary-specific expertise. 'Fieldwork' was not separated from 'interpretation' (Watson, 2011), as all researchers were instruments for data collection and all had immersion in the field from which to generate shared experience of the ethnographic object (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008). This division of labour continues into the writing phase of this project. Writing is not disconnected from the field-experience, as those who have collected the data remain central to the writing of any outputs that drew on their particular field experience (see for example, Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke and Spee, forthcoming). These very practical steps to dividing our labour are thus critical in the conduct of global, team ethnography.

Team sharing

Another challenge we faced was how to develop shared understanding about our ethnographic object as a global phenomenon. As a multinational team, with multiple team members dispersed globally, engaged in fieldwork at different times in different places, sharing was a critical challenge. Yet, in order to build knowledge of a global phenomenon we needed to move beyond multiple fractured understandings. This was no jigsaw, which we could simply bring our pieces to at the end; without adequate sharing and co-construction of the global phenomenon of interest we might find out we were all instead working on different puzzles! For example, it was not enough to have separate understandings of Bermuda; Zurich and London; these needed to come together to build a picture of the global practice of underwriting. The literature outlines this as a methodological challenge: team sharing is critical but difficult to achieve because the reflexivity that is central to ethnography is often understood as an individual activity (Barry et al., 1999; Creese et al., 2008). In particular, Barry et al. (1999) mention that a dispersed team such as ours presents added challenges to sharing and the development of team reflexivity.

We engaged in five 'modes' of sharing in an effort to work through these challenges: emotional, empirical, thematic, analytic output and codified sharing. These overlapped throughout our project and included a range of practices, such as face-to-face sharing (e.g., team meetings as well as longer retreats), sharing in the field (e.g., emails, texts and Skype) and protocols for turning our data into a shared depository (see Table 3). These practices helped construct collective knowledge about the ethnographic object, as we developed norms that prioritized sharing.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

First, emotional sharing enabled us to feel less isolated in the field, so enhancing our sense of being team members (Erikson and Stull, 1997) and building an ethos of openness within our team that was foundational to all other forms of sharing (Barry et al., 1999). For example, early in the fieldwork, PJ and APS met for a coffee after each spending the morning in separate sites. As PJ sat down she said 'that was my worst experience in the field ever', relating her tale of an unusually intransigent research participant. It turned out the APS had had an equally difficult morning with a participant to whom he'd initially struggled to explain the project. Sharing their experiences, each felt reassured that 'these things happen', rather than being a fault of the investigator per se, and together were able to discuss ways to better work with these particular participants. Meeting for lunch, dinner or coffee to share experiences, including emotional ones in this way became a dominant modus operandi when participants were in the same location; We also developed a norm of emotional sharing by email, including any particularly amusing experiences, such as emails entitled 'funniest quote of the day'. In this way, sharing all types of emotional experience, tiredness, humour, and so forth, became the norm, so also enabling sharing of those occasions that generated negative emotions, as this reflexive fieldnote shows:

> It was a tough day. I'd been kicked out of conference-call with a major client, which I had pre-arranged to be at and rushed to get to in time. We'd all been sitting down and at the last minute the lead manager suddenly, and graciously, realized he didn't want to explain to the client that I was sitting in on the call. The next meeting was also particularly tough. I had become an object of interest, despite them all being use to me hanging around. Someone had thought it was funny to disrupt the meeting to try and see what I was writing; it was one of the times when I had most conspicuously failed at my job as a 'shadow!' At lunch, before rushing to the tram and another company, I sent

> a quick email to PJ, just letting her know about my day. I quickly got an email back putting everything in perspective. PJ had been through things like that herself 'don't worry; there are always meetings you miss. There's always data around the corner.' That afternoon I was able to focus on the observation rather than my own disappointment.

This capacity for emotional sharing tended to take time and naturally developed to different degrees between team members. For example, emotional sharing was most powerful when it was based on a sense of shared experiences, such as being in the field at the same time. Nonetheless, the sense of team engendered through emotional sharing was a common experience for us all, underpinning the other elements of sharing explained below. Such sharing, provided a foundation for team-members to engage in constructive and robust debate which became habitual as part of the different forms of sharing below.

Second, we developed norms for sharing empirical reflections when we were in the field. For example, whenever we found ourselves having a 'that was interesting' type reflection we sent an email to the team. We labelled these 'memo-notes.' One example was an email titled 'You're not in Kansas now, Toto!' (a reference to Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, as an indicator of encountering something unfamiliar) where PJ reflected on one of her initial days observing Asian reinsurance business in Singapore; a new region for our team:

> When a cedent [insurer] diversifies outside Pakistan or India, they do so into places like Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda (...) so when you reinsure them, you get those risks in the international programmes…The Bahrain reinsurer, for example, is specifically interested in clients who are expanding in African energy business. I was fascinated. While the diversification principle of international programmes is the same, we just

> haven't seen that sort of business included in a programme anywhere else (Email; 3rd November, 2011).

Such emails often enabled empirical connections to be made; for example, MS might send an email from Germany 'this is what [John] thinks of the start-ups in Zurich' and RB was able to email back; 'that's almost what I am seeing the start-ups in Zurich doing, but....' This norm persisted throughout the life of the project, being perpetuated through frequent emails and, where relevant, Skype calls (see Table 2). We also built on and shared empirical reflections through lunches and dinners whenever we were conducting fieldwork in the same city, as well as debriefing and comparing fieldnotes after a shared field-experienced, such as when we observed meetings together.

Third, as our fieldwork progressed we formalized the above interpretive reflections through thematic sharing. Specifically, we generated and shared invivo codes based on our experiences, discussing these to decide collectively on areas of interest that were emerging across our project. These collectively derived themes progressively informed how we constructed our ethnographic object as a team. For example, at one of our many face-to-face meetings where we shared experiences, it became clear that the theme of 'whole account underwriting' (considering a client's multiple deals as a whole rather than each singularly) was important to underwriting practice in many European firms. This became something that we all subsequently focused upon as we returned to the field. In a following team meeting we were then able to further share our experiences and interpretations of this theme, developing additional insight into how 'whole account' underwriting shaped trading in the global market. This progress from empirical to thematic sharing, moving from fluid sharing of sporadic interpretations in the field, to a shared construction of emerging important concepts, enabled us to transcend individual reflections and construct the ethnographic object as a team.

Fourth, as we moved towards creating outputs, we drew upon these collectively-derived themes for analytic output sharing to develop practical implications (e.g., industry reports) and, eventually, academic outputs. This process was always shared and, in retrospect, we see it as critical to building 'global' insights based on our shared experiences. Our first main experience was collectively writing the interim reports for each reinsurer. At one of our away-days we set aside time for the person most acquainted with each organization to share reflections on that firm in a very practical empirically-based fashion. For example, 'Firm 3 is structured in the following way…', which then allowed someone who had not been involved with that organization to draw connections and ask questions and those familiar with Firm 3 to share additional layers of insight. Building on this technique, we worked together to develop the co-authored industry reports and presentations resulting from the project, as well as a series of academic conference papers. Consequently, any framework we developed from our project, whether for industry or for academic papers, was based on multiple team meetings (either in person or via Skype), ensuring that they reflected our collective experiences. Furthermore, a sense of those closest to a particular empirical experience (such as Firm 3 above) was retained within that sharing. In summary, we engaged in further sharing to develop analytic outputs based on our collective, rather than individual, experiences and understanding, so allowing us to co-construct the unfolding ethnographic object even after the completion of fieldwork.

Finally, our teamwork involved a surprising amount of effort and discipline in developing codified sharing. Ostensibly careful labelling, a depository and a clear record of the data are the easiest to achieve or at least control as a form of sharing. Yet, the ambiguities inherent in the unfolding nature of the data, and its sheer scope made this challenging at times. As the project evolved it became obvious that codified sharing was as important and as difficult as more tacit forms, such as emotional and empirical sharing. A high level of care

and detailed attention was required in terms of data records, labelling and a shared electronic depository, both to share field-notes and also to ensure that future searches would be easy and comparable. During a team meeting in January 2010, we recognized the importance of this and APS took charge of devising strict protocols for the management of our data to facilitate its sharing, although this then had to evolve further as the data grew in complexity. Our labelling system, allowed any of us to search for and find a particular piece of data within our database based on when it was recorded, which firm, which geographic site (e.g. Lon for London or Par for Paris), what type of data (e.g. observation, OBS, or interview, INT), what was observed (e.g. SHA for workplace shadowing, or CM for client meeting) the content of the data (e.g. international property, INP as opposed to marine and energy, MNE), and the researcher, as this label for a specific fieldnote shows: 2011-10-02_FirmXPar_OBS_SHA_ INP_LC. Such codification ensured that all of our individual data was shared, could be identified individually, and yet become part of the collective database. Such labelling also enabled careful auditing for consistency of the database (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For example, using the 'data-log' RB was able to inform PJ that interviews 2 and 3 from her recent fieldwork were missing; allowing PJ (who had conducted 17 interviews that particular week) to realize these two had not yet been sent to the transcriber.

Importantly, labelling and depositing was only the first step in codified sharing. We also had to find ways to develop shared coding schema that we could all access, particularly as the coding evolved and continues to evolve based around specific academic papers. For this, we developed NVivo databases (a qualitative data software program), where strict protocols were developed to enable data to be indexed and sourced by anyone in the team. It also had sophisticated search functions. For example, when RB began to collate our collective experience regarding 'major events' that occurred during our fieldwork, she could search for terms such as 'Chile' [earthquake] and 'Thai' [floods] across all interviews and

fieldnotes. Using the shared repository she could access all notes across the corpus of data, regardless of where or when they were collected, and identify who did the observation, so further following up on that data with the primary investigator. In this way, codified sharing was critical as we began to write from our data. More broadly, a multi-faceted conceptualization of sharing was critical to accessing the global nature of our dataset, rather than it being a series of individual and separate ethnographies.

Constructing a global ethnographic object

Accessing the ethnographic object globally presented us with another methodological challenge (Burawoy, 2000; Marcus, 1995). Ethnography is a 'local' method (Van Maanen 2011) and yet we wanted to follow a global practice across multiple local sites. This meant moving beyond simply comparing different sites to constructing them as part of a globally connected and interdependent practice[5] (Marcus, 1995). Accessing the global included practical questions about what sites to access (see Unfolding Points 4 and 5) and the need to follow the phenomenon in multiple languages (see Unfolding Point 6). While we started with an initial topic, we had no blueprint about how or what to follow. We reflect on how we worked through these challenges below.

First, we had to evolve from comparing trading practices to conceptualizing the ethnographic object as global. This involved moving from a multi-sited approach, conceptualizing our study in terms of sites of the practice, as we did initially (Unfolding Object 2 and 3) to a global approach, conceptualizing our study in terms of the interconnected phenomenon of interest (see Unfolding Object 4 and 5). For example, while we initially thought we were comparing underwriting practice in two distinct but interrelated trading hubs, as the project unfolded we began to interpret this practice as following a common object across sites (Czarniawska 1997, 2007) that was globally interconnected in

nature (Marcus 1995). We were not studying underwriting practice in reinsurance hubs as separate practices, but rather seeking to understand the common interconnected global practice of reinsurance trading. This reconceptualization shifted us from thinking in terms of a dichotomy of local and global to focusing on a global collective practice (Marcus, 1995; Burawoy, 2000).

The 2011 Thai floods, which occurred while we were in the field, provide a useful example, as we understood this event as shaping part of the global practice of collective trading of reinsurance. The floods had global ramifications as these deals were underwritten by reinsurers in all our main sites, showing how events are not confined to locales, but involve globally interconnected collective practice. We accessed this event as it occurred naturally across our sites. For example, PJ was in Singapore when the severity of the floods became apparent and observed market actors rushing to position themselves and interpret these events. She returned to the Asia-Pacific region numerous times as the event unfolded, later accompanied by RB, even as reinsurers flocked to the region to evaluate their potential losses. Meanwhile, in Europe, LC and RB were in client meetings where the floods were discussed and in reinsurance offices generally as reinsurers consumed the market news, discussed the event and its impact in meetings, tried to collect information and finally, priced deals in relation to that event on the other side of the world. PJ and RB then tapped into meetings in London, as they discussed the impact of the floods upon the forthcoming renewal prices. Noticing this event as it was constructed across our sites, and more broadly in the industry media, we were able to share interpretations as a team (described above) to construct a composite picture of the global interconnected industry practice. For example, while PJ observed the specific actions of a particular large reinsurer in Singapore, emailing the team about her experiences, these very activities were being reacted to and discussed by underwriters whom RB and LC were observing in Europe. In short, immersion in the multi-

sited nature of our dataset enabled us to understand how practices performed in different sites comprised an interconnected global practice.

Constructing the global ethnographic object involved drawing boundaries around our study: that is, what sites to include. As ethnographers we could not, and did not need to, be 'everywhere'; for example, in every country reinsurance is traded (Marcus, 1995). Rather, we needed to access the global phenomenon through carefully selected sites and trading hubs that provided understanding. Site selection was shaped as our understanding grew through immersion in the field (see Unfolding Points 4 and 5). We needed to select sites strategically to represent crucial points within the global connections we were tracing (Tsing 2011; Upadhya 2008); and we could not know in advance what those critical sites were (Marcus, 1995). Once embedded in London and Bermuda, it became clear that this provided important but incomplete understanding (Unfolding Point 4). It was rare that a deal that we had seen in London or Bermuda was not also traded in Europe, and these European players were critical in shaping the collective global practice of risk trading. Thus, the main reinsurance trading hubs in Europe became important to our study as the ethnographic object we were constructing became more apparent (Unfolding Point 5). A key practical challenge became ensuring we had a multi-lingual team (Unfolding Point 6), which enabled us to follow the global practice based on these critical sites rather than restricting ourselves to an English-speaking context as many 'global' studies do (Markus, 1995).[6] Finally, as we spent more time in the field it became clear that we needed to broaden our understanding of the role of emerging trading hubs in the wider reinsurance industry particularly in the Asia Pacific region that was a key focus area for global reinsurance trading (Unfolding Point 5). We could have continued to collect data in other regions where reinsurance is traded, but we also realized when we had reached saturation; the purpose of ethnography is not a 'census approach', accessing every possible location. Rather, we examined practice in a wide corpus

of important sites, that were sufficient to understand how different parts of the reinsurance industry interrelated to collectively trade and bear risk. In this sense, theoretical saturation regarding the ethnographic object; rather than of any particular site, determined the boundaries of our study. As we conducted our final observations and interviews, they provided interesting and confirmatory illustrations of our interpretations. However, we were not coming up with any new codes or major insights. In this sense, we felt able to end our period of intense fieldwork.

Conclusion

This paper has reflected on the methodological challenges global, team-based ethnography presents, and how we worked through these practically in the methods we adopted. We conclude with some further brief reflections. First, it is never possible for everything to be shared amongst team members. The notion of researcher as instrument in ethnography implies 'subjecting the self – body, belief, personality, emotions, and cognitions – to a set of contingencies that play on others' (Van Maanen, 2011: 219). As this suggests, an ethnographic experience is specific to the individual who has experienced it (Hannerz 2003; Zickar and Carter 2010). This is likely particularly true in multi-national studies where these individual experiences may even occur in a language not accessible to all team-members (Marcus, 1995). For example, although in any particular organization our experiences might overlap, the experience of our French team member embedded in French speaking offices would never be the same as another team member, even in the same office, and hence, can never be fully shared. It is therefore important to privilege different voices in the team, as required for particular analytic purposes. For instance, LC's voice needs to be central when discussing, drawing from data or writing about sites in Paris. In short, 'being there' as individual ethnographers remains important, even as the team benefits from the collective

insights developed beyond any single researcher in constructing a global ethnographic object. Second, global ethnographies demand considerations of breadth and depth (Markus, 1995). Naturally, we could not be in each company to the same extent as in typical single-site ethnography, as our aim was not to access the local in specific sites. Rather, our focus was on gaining depth in the collective practice of underwriting as it occurred across multiple sites. Deep immersion in every single organizational case we encountered was secondary to this primary aim. We therefore had to trade some depth in particular organizational sites, for depth in our understanding of the global ethnographic object, in which the key consideration was the connections and place of each site within the 'global' dataset (Marcus, 1995: 100). In this sense it was theoretical saturation regarding the ethnographic object; rather than of any particular organizational site, which shaped our study.

We have not directly reflected on the issue of conflict in research teams in this paper as conflict was not a central part of our experience. As PJ was the sole grant holder, decision-making regarding issues such as the project's scope were ultimately hers and this leadership and her experience were not contentious for other team members. This is not to say that these questions and decisions were not discussed within the team, but, due to the specific fellowship funding arrangements, they did not have to be negotiated between multiple leaders. Indeed, debates around these issues actually arose more between PJ and the members of the industry steering group than within the research team. Furthermore, it seems that in our case, the fact that we experienced the challenges and joys of fieldwork together and that we shared the associated emotions set up a team-dynamic of engaging in constructive debate and productive open dialogue rather than conflict. Finally, respecting individual experience, as described above, to appropriately privilege different people's voices helped ensure everyone was heard.

The practical insights in this paper provide helpful grounds for future research, as there is a recognized need to access global phenomena using ethnographic methods, but little reflection on or examples of such projects in the organizational literature (e.g., Falzon 2009; Rouleau et al., 2014; van Maanen 2006; Watson 2011). Global team ethnographies present opportunities for researching many phenomena of interest in management and organization studies, such as regulation, financial systems and climate change, to name but a few, that are increasingly global in nature (Marcus, 1995; Van Maanen, 2006). In this regard, our reflections are applicable to multi-sited ethnography generally, but are particularly illuminating for teams that are internationally dispersed; something that has had infrequent attention (Marcus, 1995). For example, attention to sharing becomes critical due to physical distance between team-members in such multi-national teams. We have shown some ways to managed this (see table 3), as well as providing some specific reflections on working in a multi-lingual team.

As we followed a global practice, we emphasize the potential of global team ethnography for practice-based studies. Practice research has been criticized for insufficient linking of micro-activities to the broader context in which they are situated (Jarzabkowski 2004; Lounsbury and Crumley 2007). This has prompted calls for more studies focused on linking micro and macro-phenomena within practice scholarship (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Vaara and Whittington 2012; Whittington 2006). Our conceptualization moves beyond the distinction between the micro as something that occurs separately or distinct from macro concepts, such as industry practice. Rather, we sought to 'follow' (Czarniawska 2007) a practice that happened to be global, and by exploring it at multiple localities, attempted to uncover the interconnections that formed the nexus of this global practice. In our study, distinctions between micro practices performed in particular sites by underwriters and the broader or more 'macro' practice of reinsurance trading dissolved. This offers a useful way

forward for scholars wrestling with issues of how to zoom in on practices and zoom out to explain the patterns within which these practices cohere (Nicolini 2009; Nicolini 2013). More broadly, global team-based ethnography holds potential for investigating many issues that sit within a presumed tension between local and global, such as distinctions between local/global identity (Ailon-Souday and Kunda, 2003; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), extending studies of HRM and other management practices beyond the organization to understand them as part of broader systems (Delbridge and Edwards 2008) and probing financial and regulatory interdependence (Kalemli-Ozcan, Papaioannou and Peydró 2013; Lütz 1998) in an increasingly globalized world. Some might assume that ethnography is less suited to investigating research topics that are global in scope. Yet, we have shown here how ethnography can be used to provide deep insight into globally interrelated practice. Further development of global, team-based ethnographic method is necessary for management scholarship to benefit from the rich detail and relevant practical insights that ethnography can provide into how complex things actually work in practice (Smith 2001; Watson 2011, 2012). Our findings were illuminating or surprising for participants precisely because they were based on the simultaneous breadth (global in scope) and depth (built on immersion in the field) of our study. In constructing the global ethnographic object we extended as well as built on, the industry participants' conception about their practice. For example, we moved them beyond their geographic stereotypes about Bermuda, London, Europe and Asia-Pacific, which was a premise behind the original research grant, and instead gave them insight into their collective practice. This was something which they would not be able to access themselves and which statistical studies or surveys would also not have illuminated. Indeed, based on the testimonial of our industry partners and participants, this research project was awarded an ESRC impact prize in the area of management.[7] As Karen Locke states (2011: 614) of ethnography 'no single approach to the study of organizations has succeeded as

effectively in discovering what has been ignored and taken for granted in the skills, the habits of thought and behaviour, and the social arrangements of organizing and working.' In an increasingly global world the research design we have outlined here is particularly pertinent for this relevance question.

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Notes

[1] Falzon (2009: 6) mentions a third logistical reason: changes in academia which made it difficult for ethnographers to organize long stays of several months in the field.

[2] One 'observation' means a meeting (either internal, with a broker or a client), or a period of shadowing of a particular underwriter at their desk (usually for half day periods), or a shadowing a specific person at a conference or social event. Hence observation involves any

continuous single period of shadowing by a researcher of a specific individual or a specific activity.

[3] This admittedly increases the workload for the project lead, who was fortunately able to dedicate all her time to the project and accepted the extra load as part of leading the project.

[4] Unavoidably this also meant that in some contexts where we had less immersion for one reason or another (e.g. negotiating a shorter period of observation with the host organization, or because it was a 'peripheral' site) we could only justify the resources for the project lead to collect data (see Table 1).

[5] In theorizing this practice we were following, it is important to reiterate the interpretive foundations of our ethnographic approach. Just as traditional ethnography both investigates and constructs the various situated lifewords it investigates (Cunliffe, 2003; Cunliffe 2010; Golden-Biddle and Locke 1993, Watson, 2000), so global ethnographies construct the practice we traced through the 'associations and connections it suggests amongst sites' (Markus, 1995: 96). For example, it is the ethnographic team - who has been in Bermuda, London and Europe – who construct the linkages and connections they perceive as pertinent, which are outside of the experience of locally-embedded actors in any particular organization, yet reflective of the global practice in which those actors participate. Consequently, the global is an 'emergent dimension of arguing about the connection amongst sites in a multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus, 1995: 99), doing away with the local/global distinction.

[6] We were not fluent in language in some parts of the Asia Pacific region although Singapore, the dominant hub there, is a native English-speaking country.

[7] This was the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Outstanding Impact in Business Prize, 2013. The ESRC is the major funder of research on economic and social issues in the United Kingdom.

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Table 1. Summary of research sites and researchers

		Sites [subsidiaries]					**Total** orgs. [sites]
Firms	1	UK PJ; APS	Bermuda PJ; APS	C. Europe 2 countries **PJ** & MS	Asia Pacific 3 countries PJ	US PJ	25 [53; plus additional 7 through video calls] **PJ [Research Lead]:** 25 [49; plus calls] **APS:** 10 [12] **MS**: 10 [12] **RB:** 8 [9, plus 2 calls] **LC:** 3 [4]
	2	Switzerland **PJ** & RB	France **PJ**	UK **PJ** & RB	Singapore **PJ**	Various (video calls) **PJ** & RB	
	3	Spain **PJ**	Germany **MS** & PJ	Belgium **LC** & PJ	France **LC & PJ**		
	4	France **LC** & PJ	Switzerland **RB** & PJ	Singapore **PJ**	Bermuda **PJ**		
	5	Bermuda **PJ**;MS;APS	Switzerland **RB** & PJ	France **LC**			
	6	Germany **APS**;PJ;MS	Singapore **PJ**	U.S. **PJ**			
	7	UK **APS** & PJ	Bermuda **PJ**;APS;MS	Switzerland **PJ** & RB			
	10	UK PJ & MS	Bermuda PJ;APS;MS	US PJ			
	8	Switzerland **RB** & PJ	UK **RB**				
	9	UK **MS,** PJ, RB	Bermuda **PJ** & MS				
	11	Singapore **PJ** & RB	Hong Kong **PJ**				
	12	UK **PJ**	Japan **PJ**				
	13	US					

	PJ
14	Japan PJ
15	Switzerland **RB** & PJ
16	UK PJ & APS
17	UK **APS** & PJ,
18	UK **MS** & PJ
19	UK **APS** & PJ
20	Bermuda **PJ&** MS
21	Bermuda **PJ**;MS;ASP
22	Bermuda **PJ**;APS;MS
23	Bermuda **PJ**
24	Bermuda **PJ**
25	Bermuda **PJ**

Key: Main regions

UK	Bermuda
C.Europe 6 countries	Asia-Pacific 4 countries
US and other (1 country plus video calls [2 additional countries])	

Key: Researchers

Bold; main person at site;
no bold; shared equally

Table 2. Unfolding progress of project

Date	Unfolding project events
May 2009	**PJ [Project Lead]** is awarded fellowship grant for ethnographic comparison of London and Bermuda
Aug 2009	PJ begins interviews and project scoping; realizes project is too large for a single researcher
Sept-Oct 2009	**APS** and **MS** join [team of three]; **15** sites amongst researchers in London (3 and 4 sites respectively) and Bermuda (8 sites). Field observations begun.
Nov. 2009	Decided to give each London member experience of Bermuda, while the Bermuda team member takes over their sites in London.
Nov 2009	4 new sites added, (3 in Bermuda and 1 in London), so making a total of **19 sites**.
April-June 2010	We move from conceptualizing the ethnographic object in terms of a comparison to an understanding of it as a global practice. This prompts realization that understanding of ethnographic object is incomplete. PJ begins discussing incorporating Continental Europe with steering group
April 2010 - ongoing	Team begins coding; and themes and data management protocols evolved (including shared server and qualitative software NVivo). Ongoing from this point
Sept.-Dec. 2010	Industry reports, press releases and industry presentations on current findings
Jan.-April 2011	Funding for Continental Europe is successful and we begin identifying sites, whilst remaining in contact with London and Bermuda sites on a more superficial level.
April 2011	Make exploratory trip to Asia Pacific
May-Aug. 2011	Appoint new team member, **RB**, to start in August Reappoint one initial team member, MS, for data collection in Germany Look for and appoint team member, **LC**, for French data collection Establish access in Continental European sites, including preliminary interviews
Aug.2011-Jan. 2012	Conduct research in 9 firms and **13 sites** in Continental Europe, as well as video conferencing and short visits to their other subsidiaries Make two data collection trips to Asia Pacific, including **7 additional sites** from

	firms above, as well as accessing another firm and **2 more new sites**
Jan. 2012-May 2012	Finalize data collection in Asia Pacific, 2 team members collect data Develop in-house reports and workshops for all participants firms
June-Sept.2012	Give industry presentations, reports and press releases
Oct. 2012-ongoing	Continue ongoing interaction and workshops with industry, that also provide post-hoc validation of data and findings

Table 3. Sharing of knowledge between team members

	Sharing practices	Modes of sharing	Description	Frequency and timing
Verbal sharing	'Away days' and team face-to-face meetings	Emotional; Empirical Thematic; Analytic	Away days where we discussed experiences, ideas, data and data analysis, and then continued discussions more socially over dinner.	**01/10; 07/10 07/10; 01/11 07/11**; **01/12** (All two nights; three days).
			Multiple days where the team discussed everything from experiences, data analysis, and specific outputs.	Multiple; usually once a month.
	Team Skype calls	Thematic	Data analysis and management	Fortnightly & then periodically.
		Emotional; Empirical; Analytic	Other – This includes 1. Industry engagement; 2. Catch ups about the field; 3. Specific calls as required; 4. Multiple 'induction' type calls for new team members.	Usually weekly; sometimes fortnightly.
	Contact in the field	Emotional; Empirical	When two people were in the same city they had lunches and/or dinner together. We also frequently travelled together (planes/trains) and when engaged in a shared experience of the field (such as a meeting) always debriefed in person. For every new member of the team and each new engagement with an organization PJ joined that team-member in the field.	Varied depending on site. For example, daily in London; dozens of times in Zurich and Paris.
Written sharing	Memo/ethno -notes	Empirical	Reflective notes about either the field or points regarding method were sent around the team via email/text message when in the field. These maintain connection with each other while in the field and as a way to share experiences/insights given that that we could not read every field note. This included sharing reinsurance news articles, with our comments and	785 saved ethnography notes; sent by email or text message. Hundreds of

			interpretations to help share and build knowledge about the broader industry.	news articles also shared and commented on.
	Square brackets	Emotional & Empirical	We devised a protocol to use a [square brackets] protocol within field notes express personal options, thoughts and feelings about something that was happening in the field.	
	Field-notes (writing up and sharing)	Empirical and Codification	These become our record in and of the field. We set up multiple protocols regarding how they were shared (below).	Initial field notes shared. The rest were stored (see below).
	Data-logs and data protocols	Codification	We set strict data recording protocol that ensured every collected item showed (in its title): when, where, by whom it was collected, what type of data (Int/Obs); nature of work observed (e.g. Client Meeting/CM; General Shadowing/Sha; Conference/Conf.) and who or what was being observed or interviewed (e.g., JohnSmith_Org1). We also kept a data mastersheet specifying the same details to track what data had been collected and stored, what data was pending storage; and indeed upcoming fieldwork commitments.	Updated and circulated frequently (i.e., weekly or as needed).
	The server (storing)	Codification	A virtual space to store and share data.	Regularly updated.
	NVivo files	Thematic; Analytic	Analysis was shared and constructed through NVivo files. Everyone could share and had access to the analysis as it unfolded.	Updated regularly.

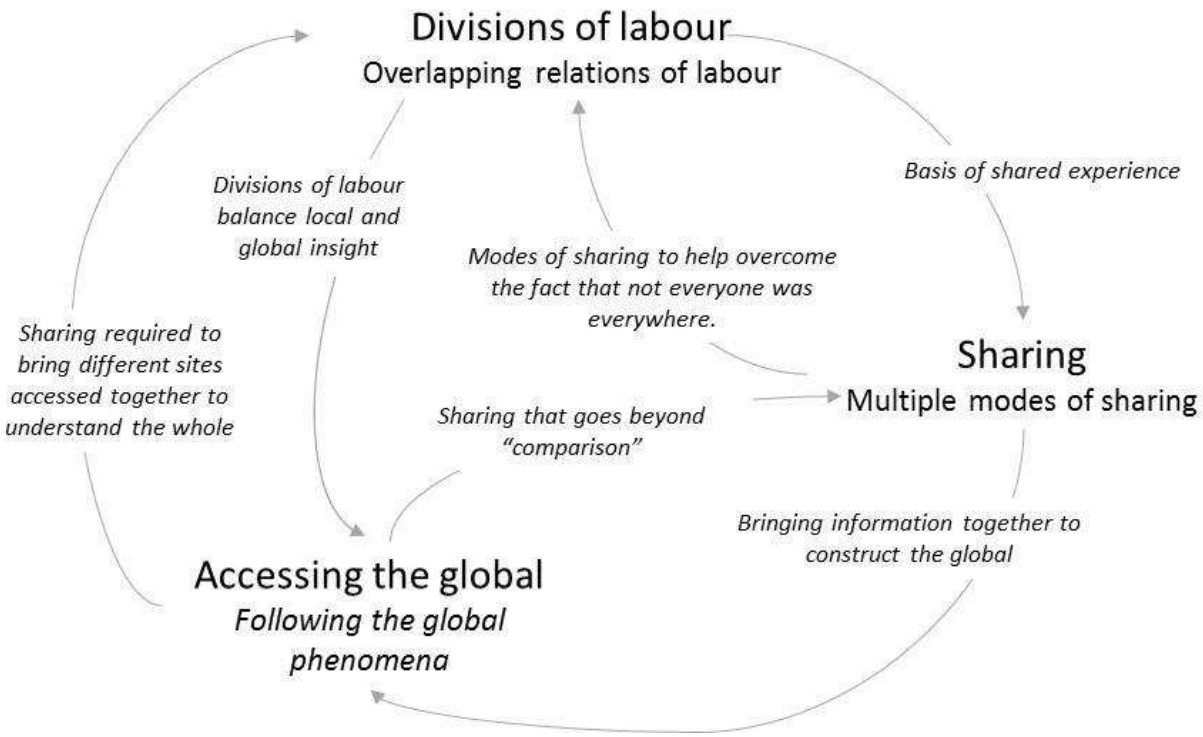

Figure 1. Addressing three challenges of global team ethnography

Paula Jarzabkowski is Professor of Strategic Management at Cass Business School, City University London and EU Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellow. Her research takes a practice theory approach to strategizing in complex contexts, such as regulated firms, third sector organizations and financial services, particularly insurance and reinsurance. She is experienced in qualitative methods, having used a range of research designs, including cross-sectional and longitudinal case studies, and drawing on multiple qualitative data sources including audio and video ethnography interviews, observation, and archival sources. Her research has appeared in a numerous leading journals including Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Management Studies, Human Relations, Organization Science, and Organization Studies.

Rebecca Bednarek is a Research Fellow at Cass Business School, City University London. Her research interests include the various practices, such as evaluation and capital allocation, through which financial markets are constructed, and strategizing in pluralistic and paradoxical organizational settings. She has investigated these issues through qualitative studies of (re)insurance as well as the New Zealand science sector. She is currently, co-authoring with Professor Jarzabkowski a research monologue on Making a Market for Acts of God for Oxford University Press on risk trading in the global reinsurance industry (as described in this paper) which draws from practice theory and social studies of finance.

Laure Cabantous is a Senior Lecturer at Cass Business School, City University London. Her research interests include the performative power of theories – i.e., their ability to shape the world and business practices – as well as risk management and calculative practices, in particular in the (re)insurance industry. She has also a long lasting interest for the study of decision-making under uncertainty. Laure's research has been published in journals such as

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